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## Review of Madonna Swan: A Lakota Woman's Story

Beatrice Medicine

*Wakpala, South Dakota*

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appraisals from persons in their natal communities. Perhaps many collectors of biography/autobiography forget that the so-called target populations from which their subjects stem are literate.

Several women from northern Lakota reservations of Standing Rock and Cheyenne River read the book and I include some appraisals. One person who was in Madonna's peer group stated that much of the information appeared to put the subject in a "bright light." She didn't feel that "it was all that truthful." Perhaps this was the function of the author who was the conduit and highlighted only the positive aspects of his subject's life. Evaluations are difficult when methodology is not precisely given. One younger professional woman, who grew up in the same community as Madonna Swan, felt that much of the life history was contrived to "make her look good." But, as in most life histories, an individual often selects only those experiences that she values or that enhance her self-image. Another woman in Madonna's same age cohort stated, "I didn't know her but it is about the same thing that we all went through." So, the story speaks to a common experiential time frame—boarding school, familial strife, family strength, and survival strategies of Lakota females. "Reservation culture" as writers on Lakota lifeways sometimes refer to recent social manifestations, was not as dismal as depicted in *etic* or outsider views. Madonna's life story evidences feminine coping strategies and a valuation of Lakota life.

These comments speak to the value of the book if used in Women's Studies or Anthropology courses in comparative modes within the two aforementioned books, and possibly Marla Powers' *Oglala Women*.

Madonna's story is significant for it presents information about one Lakota woman's struggle physically with tuberculosis and a resultant ground-breaking surgery. It also deals with the dynamics of maintaining an efficacious life-style in an economically and socially repressive larger white (*Wasichu*) society of the Northern Plains. Through her tribulations,

*Madonna Swan: A Lakota Woman's Story*. Told through Mark St. Pierre. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991. Preface, epilogue, notes, index. xi + 209 pp. \$19.95.

This book joins the burgeoning personal document data on Lakota women. The book, another as-told-to life history on Lakota women as in *Lakota Woman* by Mary Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes and *Cante ohitika Win* (Bravehearted Women) by Carolyn Reyer, centers upon life on Cheyenne River reservation and presents another facet of feminine experiences. Collections of this genre—though often getting rave reviews in publications of the dominant society—evoke certain cautionary

her extended family (*tiospaye*) and her Lakota identity were basic to her survival. Madonna Swan Abdulla went to the Spirit World in October 1992.

In true Lakota fashion, a more rigorous assessment is not possible. I must say, however, that Mark St. Pierre might have presented a more cohesive cultural back drop for context.

BEATRICE MEDICINE, PH.D.  
Research Anthropologist  
Wakpala, South Dakota